

# *News Release*

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## **Lee Dell Bradley Sentenced to Life in Prison Without Parole for Domestic Violence Murder**

**Moncks Corner, S.C.** –Solicitor Scarlett A. Wilson announced that on Friday, July 15, a Berkeley County jury convicted defendant Lee Dell Bradley of Murder. Judge Deadra L. Jefferson sentenced Bradley to life in prison without the possibility of parole pursuant to the pre-trial notice served by the Ninth Circuit Solicitor’s Office.

The victim, Frances Lawrence, was found stabbed to death on the bathroom floor of her Summerville home on May 23, 2014. The defendant reported the victim’s death for the first time two days after the murder, calling 911 to claim that the victim fell on a knife after the two argued. Bradley fled to North Carolina after placing the call, and was later located by law enforcement in Charlotte and extradited to Berkeley County. During the five day trial, Assistant Solicitors Anne Williams and Wilton H. McNeely presented evidence including, DNA analysis, medical and domestic violence experts, and witnesses who observed the defendant in the days immediately following the murder.

The trial was not the first time in court for Lee Dell Bradley. He had been arrested multiple times since 2006 following complaints by Frances Lawrence that he assaulted or threatened to kill her. Despite Ms. Lawrence’s frequent requests that the State drop charges, Bradley was convicted of CDV 1<sup>st</sup> (2009), two convictions for CDV 2<sup>nd</sup> (2010 and 2012) and a conviction for Harassment Second Degree (2010). Bradley also was convicted of Violation of Protection Order three times in 2010. The victim asked Bradley to leave her home multiple times over the years, but unfortunately often allowed him to return. He returned the last time on approximately May 15, 2014, and within a week Frances Lawrence was dead.

Frances Lawrence worked her usual shift at the Fruit of the Loom distribution center on Tuesday, May 20, 2014; leaving at approximately 1:00 am. She was not seen or heard from again until the morning of Friday, May 23, when her body was discovered by law enforcement. In the days following the murder, Bradley was seen driving the victim’s car, selling items out of her home, giving away her food, and taking money out of her bank account. The defendant told worried family members that Frances was at a friend’s house in Cross, South Carolina and that she was going to meet him at the bus station on Friday to retrieve her vehicle; all the while she was lying dead in her home nearby.

Prosecutors praised the Berkeley County Sheriff’s Office for their thorough investigation and the victim’s family members for coming forward to testify at trial. Frances Lawrence had twelve siblings, many of whom observed signs of Lee Bradley’s abuse of their sister over the years. Bradley would often threaten to kill Lawrence as well as her eighty-five year old mother if she reported him to law enforcement. Expert evidence presented at trial detailed many factors that contribute to a victim’s decision to stay with an abuser, including threats to themselves or family members.

The defendant has prior convictions for criminal domestic violence, criminal domestic violence 2<sup>nd</sup> offense, violation of a court order of a protection, forgery, harassment, and two counts of armed robbery. Prior to trial, the State served the defendant with notice of intent to seek life without parole based on his prior criminal record and the severity of the current charge.